V. *A Cure of a Muſcular Contraction by Electricity.* By Miles Partington, *in a Letter to* William Henly, *F. R. S.*

DEAR SIR,

Great Ruſſel-ſtreet, June 13, 1777.

Read Jan. 15, 1777.

IT is ſome time ſince you informed me that you had mentioned to Sir JOHN PRINGLE Miſs LINGFIELD's cure by electricity; that it excited his attention; and that it was his opinion, that the communication of it to the Royal Society would be deemed important and uſeful. I hope you will not blame my delay in the compliance with your requeſt. I have waited for no other purpoſe than to obtain the lateſt account of the permanency of thoſe good effects, which ſhe had then but recently experienced from our electrical experiments upon her. Of theſe advantages we have both had repeated confirmation; and I may now, I believe, with ſtrict propriety, from the notes I made for my own ſatisfaction, ſubmit the following particulars of them to the inſpection of whomſoever your judgement ſhall direct, or to appropriate them to any other purpoſe you pleaſe. As you

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were preſent when I firſt waited on this unhappy young lady, you will recollect the condition in which we found her. Her head was drawn down over her right ſhoulder; the back part of it was twiſted ſo far round, that her face turned obliquely towards the oppoſite ſide, by which deformity ſhe was diſabled from ſeeing her feet, or the ſteps as ſhe came down ſtairs. The *ſterno-maſtoideus* muſcle was in a ſtate of contraction and rigidity. She had no material pain on this ſide of her neck; but, owing to the extreme tenſion of the teguments of the left ſide, ſhe had a pain continually, and often it was very violent, particularly in ſudden changes of the weather. Her pulſe was weak, quick, and irregular. She was ſubject to a great irritability, had frequently a little fever, which came on of an evening, and left her before morning; her ſpirits were generally exceedingly oppreſſed, and at times ſhe was ſlightly paralytic.

She dated the origin of her diſorder at ſomething more than two years from that period. She was ſuddenly ſeized, going out of a warm room into the cold air, with a pain upon the back of her head, which admitted of ſmall abatement for ſome months, contracting gradually the muſcles to the melancholy deformity we then beheld; and notwithſtanding every prudent means had been uſed to ſubdue it, and ſhe ſtrictly adhered to every article

preſcribed to her by the faculty, ſhe was ſenſible of little variation ſince, and that rather on the unfavourable ſide.

I urged her to make a trial of Electricity. She was willing while ſhe was in London to try the experiment; and, though the weather was remarkably tempeſtuous, ſhe came to me the firſt tolerable day, and was electrified the firſt time February 18, 1777.

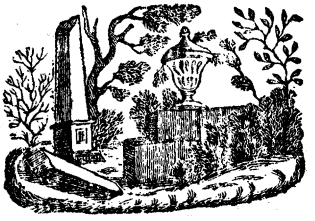
I ſat her in an inſulated chair, and, connecting it by a chain to the prime conductor of a large electrical machine, I drew ſtrong ſparks from the parts affected for about four minutes, which brought on a very profuſe perſpiration (a circumſtance ſhe had been unaccuſtomed to) which ſeemed to relax the *maſtoideus* muſcle to a conſiderable degree; but, as the ſparks gave her a good deal of pain, I deſiſted from drawing them, and only ſubjected her a few minutes longer to the admiſſion of the fluid, which paſſed off without interruption from the pores of her ſkin and adjacent parts. The next time ſhe came to me was the 24th of the ſame month: as ſhe had been in the afternoon of the firſt day's experiment a good deal diſordered, I changed the mode of conducting, and ſat her in a common dining-chair, while I dropped, for five minutes, by the means of a large diſcharging rod with a glaſs handle, very ſtrong ſparks upon the *maſtoideus* muſcle, from its double origin at the *ſternum* and *clavi-*

cula to its inſertion at the back of the head. She bore this better than before, and the ſame good effect followed in a greater degree, and without any of the ſubſequent inconveniences. I ſaw her the third time on the 27th: ſhe aſſured me ſhe had eſcaped her feveriſh ſymptoms on an evening, and that her ſpirits were raiſed by the proſpect of getting well; that, ſince the laſt time I electrified her, ſhe had more freedom in the motion of her head than ſhe had ever experienced ſince the firſt attack of her diſorder. I perſiſted in electrifying her after the ſame manner, March 3d, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 9th; from each time ſhe gained ſome advantage, and her feveriſh tendency and nervous irritability went off entirely.

The weather now ſetting in very unfavourable, and fearful of loſing the advantages we had happily reaped from our early efforts, I requeſted the favour of you, as her next-door neighbour, to electrify her every evening while ſhe was in town, and ſhe might, if any alteration took place, ſee me occaſionally. Fortunately for her, you accepted the propoſal, and to your judgement and caution in the conduct of it for the next fortnight (three evenings only excepted) you brought about the happy event; and have received her teſtimony of gratitude for relieving her from a condition under

which life could not be deſirable, to a comfortable aſſociation with her family and friends.

I am, &c.

THE method I purſued was, to place the lady upon a ſtool with glaſs legs, and to draw ſtrong ſparks, for at leaſt ten minutes, from the muſcles on both ſides of her neck. Beſides this, I generally gave her two ſhocks from a bottle containing 15 ſquare inches of coated ſurface fully charged, through her neck and one of her arms, croſſing the neck in different directions. This treatment ſhe ſubmitted to with a proper reſolution; and it gave me ſincere pleaſure to find it attended with the deſired ſucceſs.

W. HENLY.